Memorial Days

AND OTHER POEMS

JULIET C. SMITH

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Memorial Days

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

JULIET C. SMITH

AUTHOR OF

"ECHOES FROM THE PSALTER"

and "MY FIRST DUTY"

NEW YORK

THOMAS WHITTAKER

2 AND 3 BIBLE HOUSE

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JULIET C. SMITH

CONTENTS

	PAGE
Memorial Days,	5
Wherefore?	8
Ash Wednesday,	10
Carol Practice,	12
Easter Day,	13
Ascension Day,	15
Remembrance,	16
A Wonder,	18
In Memoriam,	19
"Mystic Sweet Communion,"	20
Sonnet,	23
Two Messages,	24
In the Printing-Office,	26
From a Happy Heart,	27
Child Wisdom,	29
A King's Daughter,	30
A Birthday Wish,	32
What Lack I Yet?	34
The Monk's Prayer,	36
"We Would See Jesus,"	39
Work at thy Father's Business,	41
Missionary Hymn,	43

MEMORIAL DAYS.

May 30th. *November 1st.*

'Neath azure skies, when tender buds are springing,
In the bright ending of the month of May,
While happy birds their blithest lays are singing,
The Nation keeps her sad Memorial Day.

With drooping flags and every mourning token,
While funeral marches peal from muffled drums,
And elegies o'er flower-wreathed graves are spoken
To pay her homage to her dead she comes.

'Neath dreary skies in dull November weather
When birds are silent, and the trees are bare,
Some loving, faithful souls are drawn together
To seek God's comfort in His House of Prayer.

With fragrant flowers decking font and altar,
And every token of a festal day,
With hymns and songs of praise that never falter,
The Church her tribute to her saints doth pay.

She does not call them dead, nor deem them sleeping
On the lone hillside, under each low mound,
She knows them safe in the great Father's keeping
Where rest and light and blessedness abound.

And looking for the promise of that morrow,
That vision bright "that eager hearts expect,"
She lifts us far above all earthly sorrow
To share the triumph-song of God's elect.

O blessed day, thy lessons sweet and holy
Bringing new light to weary, tear-dimmed eyes,
Move us to pray that with the meek and lowly
We soon may see our God in Paradise.

And even here we raise a glad thanksgiving,
Like to the chorus of the heavenly host,
To Him who once was dead, but now is living,
One with the Father and the Holy Ghost.

WHEREFORE?

"He was made in the likeness of men."
"That we might be partakers of the Divine nature."

Ye blessed angels! Why this joyful song,
This rapturous burst of praise?
While Judea's hills the echoes sweet prolong
And shepherds wondering gaze,
And fall, adoring in their glad amaze.

Why this rejoicing that your glorious King
Has come to earth to dwell?
To bear the cross, to feel Death's sharpest sting,
To face the pains of Hell,
In agony no mortal tongue could tell.

Hunger, and thirst, and weariness—all these
Must be His portion here;
Days full of care and nights devoid of ease,
Without a word of cheer;
And yet your chorus rises loud and clear!

"Ah, but we look beyond the cross and grave,"

A seraph voice replies,
"And see the myriads whom He came to save
By that blest sacrifice;
Who in His strength to purer joys shall rise."

"This robe of flesh He deigns henceforth to wear,
Your poor humanity;
That ye His Kingdom and His Throne may share
And,—wondrous mystery!—
Partakers of His nature here may be."

"Then marvel not that we with Him rejoice
Who see the victory won,—
Nay, rather blend with ours your grateful voice,
Ye who were else undone,
And praise His name while endless ages run!"

ASH WEDNESDAY.

"*I said, I will confess my sins unto the Lord, and so Thou forgavest the wickedness of my sin.*"
—Psalm xxxii. 6. (Proper Psalm.)

I will confess my sins, O Lord,
  I cry, as on this solemn day,
Obedient to the Church's word,
  Within these walls I kneel to pray.

I know Thy wrath is turned aside
  From me, Thy child, who strives to be
A follower of the Crucified,
  And draw both life and strength from Thee.

And yet my tears flow faster now,
  Because I know Thy pardon sweet
Awaits me, as I humbly bow,
  Repentant at Thy mercy-seat.

I will confess each sinful deed
  That grieved Thy tender Father-heart.
How oft I failed Thy voice to heed,
  And would not choose the better part.

I will confess each angry word
  Whose memory fills my heart with shame,
And crave Thy pardon, gracious Lord,
  For careless use of Thy dear name.

And oh, the thoughts of scorn and pride,
  The eager haste to credit ill,
Strong yearnings for some good denied
  Or wild rebellion 'gainst Thy will—

All these I humbly bring to Thee,
  And with them every secret sin
Which Thy keen eye alone can see,
  So close it lurks my heart within.

Forgive me, Father, as I kneel,
  And through these solemn forty days
Thy wondrous tenderness reveal,
  Teach me the more to love and praise,

That so my penitence may be
  No terror of the wrath of Heaven,
But earnest, sweet humility
  As best befits a child forgiven.

CAROL PRACTICE.

Ten little maids around me stand
A reverent and a happy band,
And "Alleluia, Lord," they sing,
Or, "Let the merry church bells ring."
For though 'tis still the Lenten tide,
From mournful thoughts we turn aside.
Though with its tale of sacrifice
The Holy Week before us lies,
We practise now our carols sweet
The coming Easter Day to greet.
And so I thought, 'neath skies o'ercast,
We keep a lifelong Lenten fast,
With cravings still unsatisfied,
With dearest wishes oft denied,
Discerning faintly through the gloom
A bitter cross, a waiting tomb—
And yet our heavenly Father's love
Sends choicest blessings from above;
Pledges of better things in store,
When pain and sin and death are o'er,
Teaching His children even here,
To sing their alleluias clear,
To practise many a joyful lay,
For His eternal Easter Day.

EASTER DAY.

"*The right hand of the Lord bringeth mighty things to pass; I shall not die, but live.*"—Psalm cxviii. 16, 17. (Proper Psalm.)

O sad disciples, cease that weary sighing;
Ye weary women, dry those bitter tears.
Your Master, whom ye late watched bleeding, dying,
In Resurrection glory now appears.

The tomb ye would have made a shrine, no longer
Holds Him ye seek; He burst the gates of brass.
Strong were Death's fetters, but our God is stronger,
His right hand bringeth mighty things to pass.

He stands among His own, His wounds displaying;
Their doubt and shrinking freely He forgives,
Till one by one He hears them softly saying:
"It is the Lord, He could not die, He lives."

O risen Christ, to us a blessed token
Of endless life Thine empty grave doth give,
Knowing that Thou the iron bars hast broken,
We too may say: "I shall not die, but live."

Yes, live with Heaven's glory streaming o'er us,
To tread the golden streets, the sea of glass,
And join with rapture in the eternal chorus:
"His right hand bringeth mighty things to pass."

ASCENSION DAY.

"*Thou shalt give him everlasting felicity and make him glad with the light of thy countenance.*"—Psalm xxi. 6. (Proper Psalm.)

Led by Thy Church, O Lord, we humbly tread
The blessed steps of Thy most holy life;
We worship at Thy lowly manger bed,
We watch beside the cross Thy dying strife,
Or kneeling adoring at Thine empty grave
And call on Thee, the mighty One, to save.

But oh, we cannot follow Thee to-day!
Only the mountain steep with Thee we climb,
Then watch Thee rising on Thy homeward way
Till Thou art lost in clouds of light sublime,
And we are left to wait Thy blest return;
Forbidden in our loneliness to mourn.

No mortal can conceive Thy welcome there,
No ear can catch the echo of those songs

With which the angel hosts Thy praise declare,
And render homage that to Thee belongs;
No sinful man Thy wondrous joy could paint
Joy never known by angel or by saint.

The truest bliss Thy loving heart could crave
The knowledge of a world redeemed by Thee;
Death fully conquered, a transfigured grave,
Fresh, glorious hopes for lost humanity;
All these are Thine. Thy bitter exile o'er,
Thy Father's house holds Thee for evermore.

Henceforth the welcome sunshine of His smile
No cloud can ever dim, rejoices Thee.
Though forced to linger here a little while,
O Saviour, glorified, we pray that we
Who now in heart and mind with Thee ascend,
At last may share Thy Home, Thy Kingdom without end.

REMEMBRANCE.

"*Better by far, you should* forget *and* smile,
Than that you should remember *and be* sad."
—Christina G. Rossetti.

If thou couldst speak, were this thy word to
me,
O friend for whom mine eyes with tears
are wet?
Nay, better far an endless deep regret,
Better the keenest pangs of memory
Of what was once, of what I hoped might
be,
Than that for one short day I should for-
get,
And go my way as though we had not
met
And parted, and the grass grown over thee.

But better far to look toward the unseen,
To feel that every happy hour below
Was but a foretaste of those joys serene
Which we through all Eternity shall know;
Then, whispering to myself "a little while,"
I can *remember* thee, dear heart, and *smile.*

A WONDER.

I do not marvel, when I sometimes find
  That I can smile again, and sport and jest
  Though thou art gone, my sweetest friend
      and best,
And I, unfit for Heaven, am left behind.
For even while He chastens God is kind,
  And He can give my weary spirit rest,
  Send His sweet peace to be my constant
      guest,
And cheerfulness itself to rule my mind.

But, oh, I wonder that I still can care
  For petty slights and careless words that
      sting;
Can find unjust rebuke so hard to bear
  Or wince in pain at ruthless questioning.
How strange it is that I can shed a tear
For any cause save this, *thou art not here.*

IN MEMORIAM.

(Rev. Dr. H., died the second day of Lent, 1897.)

With chastened hearts we keep our forty days,
Our solemn round of vigil and of fast,
Sad memories of sins and follies past
With deep repentance tempering our praise.
And even when our Easter hymns we raise
The gleams of glory seem too bright to last,
Too soon our sky with clouds is overcast,
And heavenly light is dimmed by earth's dull haze.

But for the one now hidden from our sight,
Only one day of Lent this springtime brought,
Ash Wednesday gloom to Easter dawn gave place,
Light from the cross without Good Friday's night
Was his, then festal joy surpassing thought,
And converse with the Master face to face.

"As against a thief."—St. Matt. xxvi. 55.

"Are ye come out as if against a thief?"
So gently spake the Holy One of old,
Upon His night of agony untold;
And we who read, exclaim with shame and grief,
That He who came to bring lost souls relief
Should be so used by cruel hands and bold.
And yet when we forget how manifold
His mercies are, and will not yield belief
To promises of better things in store,
But only think of what we must lay down
If we would tread the path He trod before,
And never muse upon our Heavenly crown;
Call we not Him a thief, though He bestow
More than He ever takes from us below?

"*He knoweth our frame.*"—Psalm ciii. 14.

What were the thoughts that floated through thy mind,
When, by the Spirit moved, O Shepherd King,
Thou for our comfort and our aid didst sing,
"He knows our frame," and therefore He is kind?
What gem of truth for thee lay there enshrined,
But this, that He who made each earthly thing
Knew His own works and thus remembering
That we were dust, had pity on mankind.

But in these latter days God's children read
The grand old words, and find new meaning there,
Presaging Him who left His home and came
To help us in our time of direst need,
And our humanity for aye to wear;
So reverently we say: "He knows our frame."

"MYSTIC, SWEET COMMUNION."

(Epiphany, 1901.)

Full many a day we marked with boding sigh
Here in this Holy House one empty place,
And longed again one gentle voice to trace
In low response and soaring melody,
And when we heard the summons to draw nigh
In faith and share the Saviour's feast of grace,
We missed one kneeling form, one hidden face,
And prayers for one dear exile rose on high.

That place is vacant still, and hushed that voice,
Yet now we feel that she again is here,
Joining in solemn prayer and chant once more.
Help us, O unseen Saviour, to rejoice
In loving fellowship with spirits dear
Who wait to greet us on the heavenly shore.

SONNET.

"Approach thy grave
Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch
About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams."
—"Thanatopsis."

When the Death-angel on my heavy eyes
Shall lay his hand, and with a tender smile
Bid this poor weary body rest awhile,
Till at the Saviour's call it shall arise;
When all the wondrous joys of paradise,
Where nothing evil enters to defile,
My free and happy spirit shall beguile
Age after age in sweet and glad surprise.

No fear of waking shall disturb my peace,
No dread that this delight may have an end;
But from a heart where love shall reign supreme
'Mid hymns of rapture that shall never cease,
Methinks one tuneful strain will oft ascend,
"Thank God, 'the vision glorious' is no dream."

TWO MESSAGES.

I heard one speak: with glowing words he told
Of a great Conqueror clad in robes of light,
Summoning His loyal followers to the fight
'Gainst cruel wrongs and tyrants manifold,
Strengthening the weak and leading on the bold,
Winning great victories, and then in might
Ending the wrong, establishing the right,
Making anew this ruined world and old.

And as I listened, all my soul was stirred;
For such a Leader, such a glorious cause
I fain would give myself and all I own,
Nor deem the offering costly. At His word
All earthly gain would seem to me but loss.
His triumph and His praise my joy alone.

And then in simplest words another spake
Of Him who, for the love of sinners, came
To this poor earth and wore our mortal frame,
And lived our human life that we might take
Him for our pattern, and might learn to make

Our meanest duties glorious in His name;
Who bore the burden of our sin and shame
And tasted death unmurmuring for our sake.

And, as I heard the old familiar tale
My weary heart with joy began to sing.
His pity and His care shall know no end,
His love abounds, His promise cannot fail.
So while I gladly serve my glorious King,
I too may trust and love my faithful Friend.

IN THE PRINTING-OFFICE.

"Our Lord God doeth like a printer."—Luther.

"I cannot read it, father, father, see,
I cannot read it. Spell it out for me."
So spake a child who at his father's side,
Walked through a printing-room and vainly tried
To read the type. The printer, smiling, laid
A sheet upon the form, raised it, then said:
"Come, little one, and try to read again
These letters, backward on the press, but plain
Upon the printed page." The youthful brow
Is bright once more, for he can read it now.

So with our Father's dealings. Day by day
We try to read, and puzzled turn away.
We do not understand; we cannot see
Why this was done, or that allowed to be;
But in the world to come, in His clear light,
We too shall read the mystery aright.

FROM A HAPPY HEART.

"In all time of our prosperity, good Lord deliver us."

Not with a soul by tempests shaken
  While tossing on Life's troubled sea;
Not with a heart oppressed, forsaken,
  Come I, O gracious Lord, to Thee;
No load of care, no hidden grief
Moves me to seek Thy kind relief.

Nay, 'tis the mercies that surround me,
  The sunbeams bright, the blossoms fair,
These loving hearts I find around me,
  This wish fulfilled, that answered prayer,
Bright memories and hopes more sweet—
These bring me to Thy sacred feet.

I ask not now for strength in sorrow,
  Or comfort for an aching heart,
In fear lest Thou shouldst bid to-morrow
  These blessings suddenly depart—
Ah, no! the grace for which I pray
Is to bear joy aright to-day.

To take each separate gift or pleasure
  As token of that tender care,

Which I can never fully measure,
  Yet know surrounds me everywhere,
And though my sunshine turn to night,
Still guides my wavering steps aright.

O Father, let no bliss Thou sendest,
  Fill utterly this wayward heart,
And while I take the joy Thou lendest,
  Make me content therewith to part,
When Thou shalt bid me yield to Thee
E'en that which choicest seems to me.

And keep before my spirit ever
  The sense of my unworthiness,
For what am I, whom Thou dost never
  Forget to comfort and to bless!
Yes, let me always humbled be
By each bright gift Thou sendest me.

CHILD WISDOM.

"O mother, wipe my tears away,"
I heard a little maiden say,
Although her mother's stern surprise
Had brought the tears to those sweet eyes.

Dear little one, full well she knew
Though mother chides, she comforts too;
One moment she must needs reprove,
But naught can change her tender love.

Children of larger growth are we,
Yet oft this truth we fail to see,
That He alone can balm bestow
Who caused the bitter tears to flow.

Though His rebuke hath made us mourn,
Our penitence He will not scorn,
If, like the little child, we say,
"Dear Father, wipe our tears away."

A KING'S DAUGHTER.

(Laid to rest, December 10th, 1893.)

"Look up and not down,
Look forward and not back,
Look out and not in,
Lend a hand."

Not downward, to the narrow grave where sleepeth
The lifeless form ye sadly laid away,
But upward, where the "tender Shepherd" keepeth
His little lamb, O turn your eyes to-day.

Not backward, on the days now past forever,
The happy memories of her childhood years,
But forward to the time when partings never
Shall wring the heart again, look through your tears.

Not inward, on the spirit crushed and bleeding,
Weighed down beneath this heavy load of grief,

But out on others who your help are needing,
O mourners look, and ye shall find relief.

Lending a hand to all in want and sadness
Ye work with her, whose earthly task is o'er;
With her, who in the realms of endless gladness
Still serveth "in His name" for evermore.

A BIRTHDAY WISH.

(April 7th.)

"*Delight thou in the Lord and he shall give thee thy heart's desire.*"—Psalm xxxvii. 4. (Psalter for the day.)

What shall I wish thee, dear, on this glad morning,
When thoughts of thee should loving prayers inspire?
Sweet flowers are to-day thy path adorning,
I ask for thee henceforth "thy heart's desire."

What it may be, for knowledge, love, or pleasure,
I know not now, nor would I e'en inquire.
Enough if God but grant thee that great treasure—
Through all earth's changes, still thy heart's desire.

Yet well I know that He whose love enfoldeth
Our wayward souls and fain would lead us higher,

In truest kindness oft from us withholdeth
The choicest gift of all—our heart's desire.

And therefore, dear, still be thy chief endeavor
To know His will, and to His love aspire,
Then God thy Father shall fulfil forever
In thee and for thee all thy heart's desire.

WHAT LACK I YET?

What lack I yet? In solemn silence kneeling,
From worldly cares and pleasures called apart,
I wait, O Lord, Thy Spirit's light, revealing
The deeper needs of my aspiring heart.

What lack I yet? Though pledged to Thee forever,
Signed with Thy cross, fed with Thy holy food,
My faith is dim and weak is my endeavor
To do the right, to seek the highest good.

What lack I yet? A purpose never-failing
To live Thy life, to honor Thy great name,
Though all the hosts of evil are assailing,
Still to press onward with a lofty aim.

What lack I yet? The spirit of submission,
A will made one with Thine, whose will is best,
O gracious Saviour grant me this petition,
And in Thy service let me find my rest.

What lack I yet? The best, the choicest
blessing,
Thy Holy Spirit in me to abide,
Ruling my life, my inmost heart possessing,
I then may hope to have my need supplied.

THE MONK'S PRAYER.

In a quiet, lonely cell
Knelt a monk. The convent bell
From the ivy-covered tower
Scarce had told the midnight hour.
All day long he had been pleading
With hard hearts, but not succeeding
In his chosen work of leading
Men of earth God's love to know;
Leading them to Him who made them,
To the Spirit who will aid them
In the ceaseless strife below,
And will guide them to that Heaven
Promised to all souls forgiven
Through a dying Saviour's woe.
With a sad, despairing heart
Long he pondered o'er his mission,
Then he prayed with sudden start:
"Send me, Lord, some glorious vision,
Vision of our Lord, perchance,
With His tender, pitying glance
Gently calling, 'Come to Me,
For I bring rich gifts to thee.'
Or some angel presence bright
Turning darkness into light,
Speaking words of goodly cheer,

Casting out my last vague fear;
Could I tell this wondrous tale,
Surely then I should not fail
In my chosen task of winning
Ransomed souls from ways of sinning,
Bringing them to Thy dear feet."
And he looked with reverence meet
To the image of his Master
Hanging o'er the humble shrine,
And his tears fell faster, faster,
And the words of prayer came thronging
Winged with strong, intensest longing
For one glimpse of light Divine.

Then a silence long and deep
Seemed across his soul to sweep,
And the words of supplication
Died away and left him kneeling
Wrapt in lowliest adoration,
And amid his exaltation
Came a still small whisper stealing
Into his heart's inmost cell,
Like the chime of some sweet bell.
"Who that tale would e'er receive,
Who thy vision would believe;
Thou to some half-crazed would seem,
While the others would but deem

Thou hadst had a blessed dream.
Learn a surer, better way,
Strive and labor day by day,
Overcoming self and sin,
Nourishing all good within,
Till our Lord's transforming grace
All men in thy life may trace.
As the silver moon at even
Seen in the far distant heaven
Shows us by her kindly rays
That, though hidden from our gaze,
Still the glorious sun is near,
For without his radiance clear
She would be but dark and drear;
So the Lord on thee shall shine,
Thou reflect His light Divine,
And the praise be His, not thine."

Long the monk knelt on and prayed,
Then he rose and humbly said:
"God is good; I will not pray
For a vision from above,
But endeavor day by day
In the strength of His great love
Such a Christlike life to live,
And to Him the glory give,
That the watching world may see
Not myself, but Him in me."

"*We would see Jesus.*"—St. John xii. 21.

Lord Jesus, I would see Thee,
As did those Greeks of old;
Would gaze upon Thy glory,
Thy loveliness behold;
Oh, let my inward vision
Grow clearer day by day,
That I may oft discern Thee
Upon my homeward way.

When by sin's heavy burden
My spirit is oppressed,
When friends can give no comfort,
The world afford no rest,
Then, Lord, I fain would see Thee,
My Saviour crucified,
And know my guilt is pardoned
Since Thou for us hast died.

Oft sinks my heart desponding,
And doubts and fears prevail,
My faith so weak and wavering
The tempter will assail;

'Tis then I long to see Thee,
Jesus, my King divine,
And feel Thy love is guarding
My soul, for I am Thine.

Should I grow faint and weary
With toil or pain or care,
Should sorrows come upon me
I scarce know how to bear,
Lord Jesus, I would see Thee,
My sympathizing Friend,
Whose gracious wisdom guideth
All things to some good end.

And when Death's solemn summons
Shall fall upon my ear,
Let sight of Thee, my Saviour,
Dispel all gloom and fear,
Till I have crossed that river,
And on the other side,
I see Thee in Thy beauty,
And thus am satisfied.

WORK AT THY FATHER'S BUSINESS.

Work at thy Father's business,
  Child of His love and care;
Take up thy task with boldness,
  Strong to do and dare.
Work with youth's inspiration,
Courage, and zeal, and power;
Brightly God's sun shines o'er thee
  In life's morning hour.

Work at Thy Father's business,
  Thou who hast reached the noon;
Patience and hope will aid thee,
  Rest comes sure and soon.
Seems thy toil hard and dreary?
  One who the like has known
Stands at thy side to cheer thee;
  Thou art not alone.

Work at thy Father's business,
  While thy day nears its end,
Watching with faith unfaltering
  Shades of night descend.
Lo! what a wondrous sunset
  Gladdens thy failing sight,

Till all the clouds shall vanish
In eternal light.

Still on Thy Father's business,
Speeding on wings of love,
Thou shalt go forth unwearied
From the Home above.
All that could mar or hinder
Left with thy life below,
Only the *joy* of serving
Henceforth shalt thou know.

MISSIONARY HYMN.

Of old the Saviour's loyal band
  Went forth before His face,
To spread abroad throughout the land
  The riches of His grace;
They sought those who in darkness lay,
  Whose hearts were cold and numb,
They straightened paths and smoothed the way
  Where He Himself would come.

Again to-day the summons falls
  On many a heedless ear,
To succor those whom sin enthralls,
  Who mourn in gloom and fear;
But Christian hands and hearts are weak,
  Their lips too oft are dumb.
Will none His erring children seek
  Ere He Himself shall come?

Can we to whom His Word is given
  Forbear to make it known?
Are holy joys and hopes of Heaven
  Meant for ourselves alone?
How can we feed on living bread
  While they taste not a crumb?

Rise; haste the blessed feast to spread
  Where He Himself shall come.

O Saviour, look with pitying eye
  On these our careless hearts,
And send Thy spirit from on high
  Who zeal and love imparts,
Take Thou each selfish thought away,
  Unseal those lips now dumb;
That we may face Thee in that day
  When Thou Thyself shalt come.